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XVI. *On the Cure of the Gout.* By A. STENHOUSE, M.D.
Edinburgh*.

I HAVE heretofore given some communications on the effects of ginger in the gout; and, although I have received much relief in the painful stage of that disorder, by the daily use of it for these three years past, yet the debility that followed was not less tedious: so that I continued my pursuit of something more efficacious, which I am hopeful I have at last found, and which I consider it to be a duty to promulgate. Much have I thought for these eighteen years, and many an unintelligible page have I read upon this subject: but to come to the present question, since I am not writing a book:—In the month of April last, a publication was put into my hand, which had escaped my notice, by a judicious acquaintance, to whom I am much obliged, entitled ‘Facts and Observations respecting the Air-pump Vapour-bath † in Gout, Rheumatism, Palsy, and other Disorders; by Ralph Blegborough, M.D., Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, London;’ which apparatus, if it has all the effects ascribed to it, should be in every hospital and neighbourhood. I was so much pleased with the successful operation of this apparatus, because it confirmed an opinion I have long entertained of the immediate cause of a paroxysm of the gout (for of the gout I am only speaking) that I was determined to try the experiment on myself the first opportunity, though on a more simple scale: my opinion will be elucidated by the following remarks and experiments:

The immediate cause of all acute pain I take to be either irritation or obstruction: the latter is surely the immediate cause of a gouty paroxysm. To trace causes to their elements is but an uncertain pursuit, and cannot be attempted here. That this obstruction takes place in the minute branches of the arteries, I hold to be true; nor do

* From the *Edinburgh Courant* of January 9, 1804.

† For a description of this apparatus see a printed letter of Dr. Blegborough, dated February 10, 1802; also the *Philosophical Magazine*, vol. xiv. p. 289. We cannot here avoid noticing a late plagiarism of this invention. A French paper, *Le Clef du Cabinet*, of June 5, 1803, informs the Parisians, that a M. Jacques Boyol, a physician at Nice, among other useful medical machines, has invented different pumps for curing gout, rheumatism, palsy, &c. by administering baths of air and vapour. The article concludes with stating, that Mr. Nath. Green, the English consul at Nice, had offered the *modest* inventor 30,000 guineas to carry his discovery to London!!!

I see any phænomenon in a fit of the gout, but what may be accounted for by this hypothesis. It will be easy to see that for the present I deny the existence of gouty matter; nor do I consider the earthy concretions formed in the joints after repeated severe attacks to be a proof of this, since the same phænomenon may be produced from the blood out of the body by a similar process. It is remarkable that, though much has been written on this subject, so little has been attempted, either to prevent the generating this disease, or mitigating the violence of its paroxysms. The reason of this I take to have been a supposition that there was something deleterious in the obstructed matter, and that it was unsafe either to prevent the fit, or tamper with the parts affected: of this prejudice I have had my share until within these three years. There is a prevalent opinion I know, with those unacquainted with the laws of the circulation of the blood, that there are applications, very improperly called repellents, which may drive back the gouty matter; but I tell my gouty readers, there is no operation can take place in the animal system in this sense: in fine, there can be no repellents nor discutients where there are no absorbents: but my readers must be cautious how they counteract the intentions of nature, or, if they must use the word, they must beware that by improper applications they do not repel the disposition of the system to produce a paroxysm, and thereby send it to some more vital part; which happened to myself, the first symptom I had of this disease.

I come now to describe my practice upon myself; I have already said I took the hint from the air-pump vapour-bath eight or nine months ago. The end of September last I was attacked in my right hand, but being in the country I could not put my intentions in practice until I came home; by this time the fit had acquired its last stage both in pain and swelling. I then got a common tureen half full of boiling water; I laid my hand across, and covered all over with some folds of flannel; but presently the steam was so hot, that I was obliged to reduce the heat of the water so as to be able to bear the steam. In a few minutes the pain abated, and in about 25 minutes I was perfectly free from pain; and as the steam became so cold as to be no longer useful, I dried my hand and wrapped it up in flannel; and, had it not been for the swelling, I could have used it as well as if nothing had happened. About this time my right foot began to give me some symptoms of an attack; I allowed it to proceed for about 24 hours, or until

I was convinced it was to be a real fit. I then got a pail with two handles, and from the handles I suspended a towel to rest my heel upon; I then filled the pail with boiling water, so full as not to touch my heel, and covered it over with several folds of flannel for about half an hour, as in the first experiment; I dried my foot, and wrapped it up in flannel: I was perfectly free from pain, and walked about the room/as usual. I repeated this immersion five or six times this day and the following, since when I have had no complaint in my foot; but, as I had only immersed my hand once in steam, in two days the pain returned, as if the obstruction had not been perfectly removed. I had recourse to the steam again, which I repeated two or three times. I have waited thus long to give a fair trial to its effects. I am still alive, and have been in good health ever since, though at the border of seventy.

May I not fairly say that here are two experiments, and, what is more, at different stages of the paroxysms, which have been successful in removing the immediate cause, which I consider to be obstruction only, by the relaxing quality of the steam, or, what is the same thing, diminishing the pressure of the common atmosphere? Finally, I shall continue the ginger daily, and repeat the vapour-bath when necessary; and if either stomach or bowels, or other viscera, shall be attacked, I shall immerse my whole body in a hogshhead of steam. To prevent the frequent return of the paroxysms I live abstemiously, being certain that, in my case, the habit of body between repletion and inanition will conduce thereto; and such a state will be the most likely to prevent or mitigate diseases of any kind. If what has been said and done shall be thought erroneous, I shall kiss the rod of conviction.

A. STENHOUSE, M.D.

XVII. *On the Use of Steamed Potatoes as a Substitute for Hay to Cattle**.

THE silver medal of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, was this session voted to John Christian Curwen, esq. M.P., of Workington Hall, in Cumberland, for his extensive experiments on feeding cattle with steamed potatoes; from whom the fol-

* From *Transactions of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce*, vol. xxi.